

Labor and Public Employees Committee
February 25, 2010

**TESTIMONY OF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

ON

Raised Bill 171

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE PROGRAM

The Department of Education does not support Raised Bill 171 which seeks to transfer \$1.7 million from the General Fund to the Department of Education to establish and administer, no later than July 1, 2010, a licensed practical nursing program at the regional vocational-technical schools.

The Department has a number of concerns with the bill as drafted. First, the timeline established in this bill is unrealistic. The earliest the Department could re-establish LPN program is September 2010. The Department will need to hire new staff in accordance with the State Vocational Federation of Teachers contract language as well as the SEBAC agreement. In addition, previous applicants will have to be contacted and a new applicant search may have to be undertaken.

Further, the bill does not clarify to what extent the program is to be re-established and whether adequate funding will be secured to sustain the program in the future. \$1.7 million will not allow for the program to be re-established at the same level as it previously operated. Previously, the technical high school system operated twelve LPN programs at different technical high schools across the state. If all twelve programs were re-established in September, the FY 2011

cost would be approximately \$2.8 million. For FY 2012, this number would rise to nearly \$3.5 million, which is the approximate cost to run all twelve programs for a full year. If not all programs were re-established and tuition rates were increased, certainly the Department could operate the program for slightly less money. However, given the current fiscal crisis that the state is dealing with, we are reluctant to re-establish a program that may find itself in the same position a year from now.

As such, the Department of Education does not support Raised Bill 171.